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SUBJECT Kirovabad - Bayan Railway and Bayan - Dashkesan Cableway

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1. A new railway branches from the main Baku-Tbilisi line about 10 km. west of Kirovabad (40-41N, 46-22E). Here the new track branches in a southwest direction following the valley of a river which flows north into the Kura River. The railway ends 5-6 km. south of the small town of Bayan (40-34N, 46-09E) because the obstacles of the terrain and especially the differences in altitude there are so great that they can not be surmounted by a railway. Here, therefore, begins a cableway which goes up to the village of Dashkesan and somewhat farther to a cobalt mine.
2. Construction of the railway had already been started in the early part of 1944, at which time Hungarian and Rumanian PWs were employed. Later, German PWs were added to the work force. The construction of the railway was roughly finished in the fall of 1948. Since then, the track extending to the terminal south of Bayan has been used to transport building materials for the erection of the cableway. Since 1946, however, short sections of track have been used for work trains.
3. The construction of the cableway between the railway terminal at Bayan and the cobalt mine beyond Dashkesan was started in July 1948. The work was done by Soviet convicts. By autumn 1948, the foundations of reinforced concrete were almost finished and some of the poles had been erected. The cableway is scheduled to be ready for operation by the end of May 1950. From all indications it appears that this deadline will be met.
4. A construction firm managed the project. Soviet engineers had technical supervision over the project as a whole, and individual construction jobs were under the direction of more or less technically educated foremen. From the handling of the construction it was apparent that the contractor was interested in completing the project in the shortest possible time. No military personnel were seen at the construction sites.
5. The construction area covered the 80 km. stretch of the railway and the 15 km. extent of the cableway. Tremendous blastings were necessary in order to make a somewhat normal course for the tracks.

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6. The technical equipment for the project was very primitive. Almost everything had to be done by hand, regardless of the great difficulties frequently involved. The section at Bayan, however, was an exception. Here a D&AG excavator was available for the digging and was used to clear the debris after the extensive blastings.
7. The river valley itself offered considerable obstructions; it was not unusual for as many as 170 explosive charges to be laid under a projection of the mountain. The prisoners were then taken a considerable distance away, and whole parts of the mountain side were blasted into the air. The resulting huge fragments of rock then had to be broken up by minor blastings. Field railway cars were available at the construction sections for the removal of the dirt and stone fragments. These cars, however, had to be driven by hand. The boring for the explosive charges was made by pneumatic drills, which were the only mechanical equipment on hand for use in breaking up the stone and rock. These pneumatic drills and compressors were of American origin, as were the numerous Studebaker trucks used at the various construction sites.
8. Construction along the railway was carried out in a thorough manner. The tracks were laid in a standard gravel bed, which itself was laid on solid, rocky ground. The rail line has a single track of Soviet gauge. The steepness of the slope of the banks of the track bed often made it necessary for the engineers to grade the track slopes to a height of 40 meters. Four stone crushers, distributed along the rail line at even distances, were used day and night for the construction of the railway.
9. Although the foundations were well built, other parts of the construction were not made as carefully. The wooden sleepers were laid without proper protective measures. In addition, [] poor materials were used. The 25X1 rails were merely nailed down by a special unit taken from the ranks of the Soviet convicts. Since this was done as a kind of piece work, these men worked with an uncanny swiftness and adroitness. The rails that were used were rails of a standard length of 12 meters. This section of track is usable for the heaviest loads.
10. The new railway has no tunnel on its entire length. Ledges of the mountain have simply been blasted away. This could be easily done, since the valley, with very few exceptions, is completely desolate and uninhabited.
11. There are three large, arched concrete bridges across the river. Two of the bridges have a span of about 60 m., and one extends over a distance of about 40-50 m. The bridges average about 25 m. above the river. They are located near kilometer marks 22, 27, and 35.
12. A particular specialty of the railway are the emergency tracks which have been installed at each of the small stations or sidings. Since the incline is very considerable--the line, from the lowlands of the Kura, rises to an altitude of 900 m. on a comparatively short track section--one has reason to fear the possibility of frequent accidents. If, during a trip up the mountain, several cars should break loose from the train, they can be guided onto these emergency tracks, which are 150-300 m. long and have an incline of at least 30 m.
13. At present, steam engines are used on this railway. The incline is so great that usually two locomotives have to be used for 2-3-4-carloads of planks. Now, however, the railway is used primarily to transport ore down from the mine. Therefore, the cars going up the mountain are usually empty.
14. [] two especially beautiful stations along the entire new railway: one in Kirovabad at kilometer mark 25, and the other at Bayan. The interior of these stations was decorated with polished stone work.
15. A shunting station with 8-10 tracks and the appropriate buildings and mechanical installations is to be built in 1949 at the change-over point from railway to cableway about 4 km. south of Bayan. [] only a single track had been laid here.

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- 25X1 16. [] the cobalt mine at Dashkesan, since the quarries were about 15 km. from PW camp 7223/11. The right to prospect here is said to have been obtained by the Siemens Firm about 25 or 30 years ago; they are also credited with the foundation and completion of the construction of the mine installations.
17. Until recently, the ore was transported along a road which utilized the same river valley as the newly built railway. After 1945, this road was partly rebuilt, or rather widened at the dangerous spots, by Pws. Now, therefore, it has a road-bed firm enough to withstand very heavy traffic. Along the 12 km. stretch from Bayan to Dashkesan, the road has to surmount a difference in altitude of 300-400 m. [] this road continues beyond Dashkesan toward the Turkish border, which is approximately 140 km. away.
18. The construction of the railway from Kirovabad to Bayan was carried on very energetically, with great expenditure of labor. During the period from 1944 to 1947, about 5000 PWs were lodged in the various work camps along the railway. In addition, there were about 500 Soviet convicts. Beginning in 1947, the number of laborers decreased somewhat until now probably only convicts are left. Work was carried on in three shifts over a 24-hour period.
- 25X1 19. [] an increase in military activity in this river valley beginning in 1947. After the completion of the railway construction, the railway work camps used by the PWs were almost completely taken over by Soviet soldiers. Active maneuvers took place in the valley. A large motor park is at the disposal of the small garrisons stationed there. These are primarily artillery formations which are equipped with anti-tank guns of 75 and 105 mm. caliber, mounted on 4-wheeled gun carriages.

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